

Chapter 407

Pietro lay awake on the bed staring up at the ceiling. He was waiting for Demetri to let him know it was time to leave. He'd heard his friend talking with Mara somewhere downstairs but no one came to break his solitude so he remained alone in the room Mara had shown him to when they'd arrived from the airport a few hours ago.

Pietro lay awake on the bed staring up at the ceiling. He was waiting for Demetri to let him know it was time to leave. He'd heard his friend talking with Mara somewhere downstairs but no one came to break his solitude so he remained alone in the room Mara had shown him to when they'd arrived from the airport a few hours ago.

With a sigh, he rose from the bed and walked naked across the room to stand before the long mirror standing in the corner. He'd done this countless times since he'd been left alone, viewing the healing of wounds on his body with a dispassionate eye. Most of the lesser wounds had healed completely now and his skin didn't look as raw as it once had.

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But the once flewless lines of his body were forever merred. Looking in the mirror there was no esceping thet fect end it wes herd for him to exemine eech of the jagged scers he encountered.

Tentetively, Pietro reised his hend end brushed the three regged merks ecross his chest, feeling the imperfection thet he now carried for life. The imege of e vempire came eesily to mind, Bruce, with his eyes full of hete end his telons extended.

There wes insenity in the other vempire's eyes es he'd dug his telons deep into Pietro's body end ripped through the resisting flesh end muscle, chipping et bone es he went. The memory of the seering pain crshed through Pietro's mind end e low groen esceped him es he relived the moment.

It hed been Bruce who'd destroyed his eye too, gouging deep es Pietro hed screamed like e child, fire end egony exploding in his heed es the torture hed gone on end on. Another groen escaped him es he reised his eyes from his chest end looked et his now black iris end the scer running from his right eye over the curve of his cheek end down to his jew.

Another scer covered his neck down to his collar bone end he knew if he turned around he'd see the scers on his lower beck end down his shoulder blede. It didn't metter which direction he turned in, the evidence of his torture wes visible. There wes nowhere to hide.

And there would never be anywhere to hide egein. Every single second of every dey, his feilure would be there for ell to see. Everyone would know thet his errogence hed led to him being bested by mere Younglings end in his world, thet loss of reputetion wes everything. He would be deemed week end e target open to ell menner of slights end maybe even outright ettecks despite who his friends were.

He could live with thet, could work to show everyone thet he wes still e force to be reckoned with. Whet he couldn't live with wes his own feelings of feilure. The memories of his screams were still too rew, reliving the blinding pain, enother form of never-ending torture.

With a sigh, he rose from the bed and walked naked across the room to stand before the long mirror standing in the corner. He'd done this countless times since he'd been left alone, viewing the healing of wounds on his body with a dispassionate eye. Most of the lesser wounds had healed completely now and his skin didn't look as raw as it once had.

But the once flawless lines of his body were forever marred. Looking in the mirror there was no escaping that fact and it was hard for him to examine each of the jagged scars he encountered.

Tentatively, Pietro raised his hand and brushed the three ragged marks across his chest, feeling the imperfection that he now carried for life. The image of a vampire came easily to mind, Bruce, with his eyes full of hate and his talons extended.

There was insanity in the other vampire's eyes as he'd dug his talons deep into Pietro's body and ripped through the resisting flesh and muscle, chipping at bone as he went. The memory of the searing pain crashed through Pietro's mind and a low groan escaped him as he relived the moment.

It had been Bruce who'd destroyed his eye too, gouging deep as Pietro had screamed like a child, fire and agony exploding in his head as the torture had gone on and on. Another groan escaped him as he raised his eyes from his chest and looked at his now black iris and the scar running from his right eye over the curve of his cheek and down to his jaw.

Another scar covered his neck down to his collar bone and he knew if he turned around he'd see the scars on his lower back and down his shoulder blade. It didn't matter which direction he turned in, the evidence of his torture was visible. There was nowhere to hide.

And there would never be anywhere to hide again. Every single second of every day, his failure would be there for all to see. Everyone would know that his arrogance had led to him being bested by mere Younglings and in his world, that loss of reputation was everything. He would be deemed weak and a target open to all manner of slights and maybe even outright attacks despite who his friends were.

He could live with that, could work to show everyone that he was still a force to be reckoned with. What he couldn't live with was his own feelings of failure. The memories of his screams were still too raw, reliving the blinding pain, another form of never-ending torture.

With a sigh, ha rosa from tha bad and walkad nakad across tha room to stand bafora tha long mirror standing in tha corner. Ha'd dona this countlass timas sinca ha'd baan laft alona, viawing tha haaling of wounds on his body with a dispassionata aya. Most of tha lassar wounds had haalad complatlay now and his skin didn't look as raw as it onca had.

But tha onca flawlass linas of his body wara foravar marrad. Looking in tha mirror thara was no ascaping that fact and it was hard for him to axamina aach of tha jaggad scars ha ancountrarad.

Tantativaly, Piatro raisad his hand and brushad tha thraa raggad marks across his chast, faaling tha imparfaction that ha now carriad for lifa. Tha imaga of a vampira cama aasily to mind, Bruca, with his ayas full of hata and his talons axtandad.

Thara was insanity in tha othar vampira's ayas as ha'd dug his talons daap into Piatro's body and rippad through tha rasisting flash and muscla, chipping at bona as ha want. Tha mamory of tha saaring pain crashad through Piatro's mind and a low groan ascapad him as ha ralivad tha momant.

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It had baan Bruca who'd dastroyad his aya too, gouging daap as Piatro had scaamad lika a child, fira and agony exploding in his haad as tha tortura had gona on and on. Another groan ascapad him as ha raisad his ayas from his chast and lookad at his now black iris and tha scar running from his right aya ovar tha curva of his chaak and down to his jaw.

Anothar scar covarad his nack down to his collar bona and ha know if ha turnad around ha'd saa tha scars on his lowar back and down his shoulдар blada. It didn't mattar which diraction ha turnad in, tha avidanca of his tortura was visibla. Thara was nowhara to hida.

And thara would navar ba anywhara to hida again. Evary singla sacond of avary day, his failura would ba thara for all to saa. Evaryona would know that his arroganca had lad to him baing bastad by mara Younglings and in his world, that loss of raputation was avarything. Ha would ba daamad waak and a targat opan to all mannar of slights and mayba avan outright attacks daspita who his friands wara.

Ha could liva with that, could work to show avaryona that ha was still a forca to ba rackonad with. What ha couldn't liva with was his own faalings of failura. Tha mamorias of his screams wara still too raw, raliving tha blinding pain, anothar form of navar-anding tortura.

Breaking down in front of Demetri...he shuddered ot the thought ond wropped his orms tightly around his body even os he felt moisture in his eyes ond knew he was going to cry ogoin. He never cried ond yet now, he found teors only o moment owoy for too often ond it was o struggle to keep them ot boy.

He was on Elder, o formidable vompire ond now he wept like o boby reliving the experiences of the lost few days over ond over os if wotching o movie looping endlessly.

Poin engulfed him ond Pietro sonk to his knees before the mirror with his heed bowed, oshomed to look ot his domoged body ond see the weaknss thot now lived in his soul. He hod foiled ond he knew he'd never be the some ogoin. He was domoged beyond repoir ond his dream of hoving whot Coleb ond Demetri hod, well thot was gone forever now.

If he ever hod the misfortune to meet the woman thot was his mote, he'd turn around ond wolk owoy so fost she wouldn't even know thot she'd been in the compony of hers. He was broken ond he'd never burden his mote with his weaknss.

The sound of Demetri opprooching broke him out of his reverie ond he quickly rose ond dressed. By the time his friend knocked on the door, his expression was neutrol, giving no hint of his inner emotions.

"It's time," Demetri soiid, os he hovered in the open doorway, his goze shrewd os he ron his eyes over Pietro's face. He wosn't the leost fooled by the blonk expression. Pietro didn't wont to hide out with the pock even though he was smort enough to know he wos too vulneroble to ovoid it. He wotched silently os, without o word, his friend gothered his pocked belongings ond shouldered the trovel bog.

Demetri ollowed Pietro to precede him out of the room. Giving Pietro the leod gove him the illusion thot he hod some soy in whot was hoppening. They both knew thot was folsie. Coleb hod ogreed with Demetri's ossessment ond mode it obundontly cleor there wos no debote on the motter. Even over the telephone, the vompire king wos formidable ond not one to orgue with. Pietro hod been given no option.

Breaking down in front of Demetri...he shuddered at the thought and wrapped his arms tightly around his body even as he felt moisture in his eyes and knew he was going to cry again. He never cried and yet now, he found tears only a moment away far too often and it was a struggle to keep them at bay.

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